

Migration and Labour Market Challenges of West African Immigrants with Finnish Qualifications in Helsinki, Finland

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Abstract:

This work tries to investigate the challenges faced by immigrants with Finnish qualifications in the labour market. In this study, specific emphasis is placed on West African Immigrants with Finnish qualifications in Helsinki, Finland; the study in trying to achieve this did an extensive review of the pattern of labour migration in an era of globalisation. It also examined the patterns of emigration from Africa of immigration to Finland and also looked into the challenges faced by immigrants with regards to the problems of integration, job placement and the challenges of ethnic and racial segregation. Consequently, a case study of West African immigrants was chosen for specific analysis. Qualitative analysis was chosen using the semi structured interview to elicit responses from four respondents who were chosen from the Greater Helsinki area. This is in addition to personal observation as a fellow West African immigrant who is at the verge of entering the Finnish labour market with a Finnish academic qualification too.

The findings were divided into three parts with the first part focusing on Finnish universities' experiences of the interviewees. This is to assess the level of integration and acceptance into the Finnish society. The second part dwells on real life experiences after graduation and the different dimensions of challenges faced by the respondents. The last part tried to look at the psychosocial impediments confronting West African immigrants in Finland in the course of job search after graduation. Useful recommendations were offered to improve the lots of these immigrants in the Finnish labour market for the over all development of the country.

Keywords: Labour market, Finnish Education, Qualifications, Immigrants, West Africa

I. INTRODUCTION/ BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Millions of people worldwide are leaving their home countries every year for leisure, adventure, for religious purposes, and in search of work amongst other reasons. However, in this study, the interest of the researcher is on those who migrate to study in foreign countries, acquire educational qualifications and search of work in their country of residence. At the beginning of the twenty first century, the total number of persons living outside their countries of origin world wide was estimated at over 150 million. Out of this number, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) estimates some 100 million as migrant workers and their families. The study equally shows that Africa has one of the largest numbers of migrant workers, about 20million, and one fifth of the global total. From the African subtotal, West Africa contributes more than 25% of migrants in search of jobs which relies on some form of education or acquisition of skills. This migratory pattern, which has been fuelled by globalization, has continued to have significant impact on the world economy. According to the ILO facts on migration, migrant workers send home to developing countries, large volumes of remittances estimated at between US\$16 Billion and US\$25 Billion, with informal remittances in 2005 to support their families and communities, while at the same time contributing to the growth of their host countries. (www.ilo.org/migrant). The rate of remittances seems to be on the increase over time and space (ILO, *ibid*). It should be noted as immigrants who studied and acquired educational qualifications in their countries of residence, certain challenges still confront them. Some of these challenges include; sound language comprehension, lack of adequate integration, discrimination of minority groups and possible feeling of inferiority resulting from non integration in their countries of residence (Basch et al. 1994; Portes 1997, 1999; Waters 1999; Faist 2000).

During the economic depression of the 1990's in Finland, the employment rate plummeted for both the Finnish as well as for the foreign labour force in Finland. However, the difference in terms of percentage was significant. Foreigners lost their jobs more easily than Finnish people did, they were more dispensable and as the number of immigrants coming to Finland continues to increase annually, one might wonder how much the situation today differs from 20 years ago. (Koivukangas, 2003, 5-6) Over the past two decades, the number of people living in Finland, who are not Finnish citizens, has increased significantly. In 2008 a total of 143 256 foreigners resided in Finland while the corresponding figure in 1990 was 26 255 individuals, in other words, the number of foreigners residing in Finland has increased by 117 001 persons over a time span of 18 years. Approximately 2.5 percent of the employed labour force is of foreign origin (figures from 2006). Foreign referring to individuals who do not have either of the two official languages Finnish or Swedish, nor the minority language Sami stated as their mother tongue. The biggest language groups among foreigners working in Finland speak Russian followed by Estonian and English. (Statistics Finland, 2009b; Statistikcentralen, 2006).

Out of this no Africans make up a sizeable proportion of the immigrant population, while West Africans remain a significant component of Finnish immigrants. While in Finland, these immigrants pursue various levels of education to enhance their socio-economic status through gainful employment in Finland. This decision stems largely from the widely acceptable high reputation that Finnish education has acquired in the last few decades. According to (Dahlskog , 2010) For years, the Finnish educational system has received positive attention and gained a good reputation, partly due to the success of Finnish students in international measurements and comparisons such as the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) in which Finland has ranked highly ever since its introduction in 2000. Finland annually receives a significant stream of delegations called

"educational pilgrims" from around 50 different countries who are who come to the country in order to find out the secret to the success of the Finnish educational system. Research has shown that teachers in Finland are happier than their counterparts in other countries and this might be one of the reasons that Finnish pupils achieve such good results. (PBS).

In the immigration discourse, the value of immigrants has been usually assessed in terms of their ability to benefit and to enrich their country of residence. It is difficult to determine economic benefits of immigration to Finland. However, many studies have demonstrated that immigrants contributed to Finland in different ways, and the country has benefited from immigration (Li 2003). Today, highly educated immigrants continue to contribute to Finnish competitive strength in a global market place. There is a widespread belief that education is a key determinant of an individual's economic success in society (Immigration Act 2001). People's human capital is considered as a resource, which can be exploited effectively and can be profitable for individuals and society as a whole. However, various structural constraints exist in society. Finnish society is also highly stratified according to inequalities of class, gender, race and ethnicity, region and many other social factors (Wotherspoon 2009: 225-226). Even in the face of these apparent challenges which are not peculiar to the Finnish finish society these immigrants pursue various disciplines in Finnish Universities with the hope of finding gainful employment opportunities. It is therefore the thrust of this work to examine the challenges and prospects of West African immigrants in Helsinki with regards to job prospects upon graduation from Universities in Finland. The study will thus assist in a sound social policy of integration of immigrants into the Finnish society.

II. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The study seeks essentially to investigate the experiences of West African immigrants with Finnish educational qualifications in the Finnish labour market. In doing this the study will attempt a sustained inquiry of the various challenges faced by West African immigrants who obtained Finnish qualifications in the labour market. The challenges will be viewed from the psychological, economic and social spheres with a view to offering useful recommendations that will help them cope with the challenges faced by West African immigrants who live in Helsinki in the labour market after graduation. As a West African immigrant in Finland who is part of the research work, the Finnish resident will draw from her personal experiences and also the experiences of fellow immigrants to fully explore this subject matter.

III. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study will seek to a cover these three research questions;

- i. To What extent have West African immigrants with Finnish qualifications able to find employments according to their qualifications?
- ii. What kind of challenges do they encounter in course of seeking their desired career jobs?
- iii. What kind of skills/tools is required of them to secure their desired career jobs?

The study will vigorously attempt to provide answer through the aforesaid questions through the review of relevant literature and the responses from interviewees that will be selected from West African immigrants in Helsinki who have acquired Finnish educational qualifications and have experienced the challenges of the Finnish labour market.

IV. GLOBALISATION AND MIGRATION

One may ask, why people migrate from one country to another? To answer this question in the twenty first century, it is important to review the impact of globalisation on migratory pattern across the world. These newly emerging migratory movements, according to Castles (2002), should be associated with globalization, and can be called “globalization of international migration”. Castles (2002: 1144) asserts that “migration is clearly a systemic element in the processes of globalization, but this is merely a new form of a systemic role that has existed in various guises ever since the beginnings of the capitalist world market around the sixteenth century”. In an age of transforming nation-states, of various kinds of transnational networks, and of ‘space of flows’, according to Castles (2002: 1146-1147), it would be useful to explore the specific characteristics of current international migration. Under these conditions, the assumption that the permanent settlement migration (from one-nation state to another) and temporary labour migration (returning home after a period of time) are two forms of international migration has been challenged by new forms of migration. Out of these new forms and trends, it is first of all critical that international migrants are more diversified in terms of social and cultural characteristics (from skilled and entrepreneurial migrants to unskilled labour migration, asylum seekers, and growth in independent female migration). Secondly, the growing facilities of information and transport technology increase the volume of circulatory, repeated and temporary migration. And thirdly, this diversification goes hand in hand with the emergence of transnational communities and consciousness, which is based on informal networks of migrants who live in two or more countries. In addition to these new trends, King (2002: 89) suggests that new forms of migration are closely related with the new non-economic motivation of migration such as self-realization, life-style and consumption. Thus, the increasing speed and diversification of migration processes (in other words: shifting set of agents, mechanisms and routes) fit extremely well with the logic of globalization. From the 70s on, these theoretical and historical developments, which are associated with international migration, have brought new socio-economic contradictions to the political agenda. In Western Europe, the so-called “guest” workers and their conationals began the process of “community formation”. This community formation process gave way to discussions about the integration of immigrants, their citizenship rights and the possibility of multiculturalist policies. In Germany, for example, many migrants could get citizenship rights from the 90s on. On the other hand, from the 1973 oil crisis on, many European countries started to apply more restricted migration policies, which have increased irregular migration. In the following years, under the “pressures” of globalization, the contradictions between insertion and exclusion of immigrants, between the demands of market and states, and between the inequalities of liberal markets and the ideals of equal citizens have come into sight in European urban areas (Abadan-Unat, 2006: 444-449). And, as Massey and his colleagues (1998: 6) put simply, “the economic marginalization of immigrants is associated with another characteristic of the post-industrial period: immigrants are no longer perceived as wanted or even needed, despite the persistence of a demand for their services”. Massey et al. (1998: 7) call this phenomenon “a segmented demand for immigrant workers”: The continuing demand for immigrants, combined with high native unemployment and growing unease with ethnic diversity, yields a contradiction that governments seek to manage through restrictive policies that confine migrants to the labour market, limit the entry of dependants, discourage long-term settlement, and repatriate those who enter outside authorized channels.

V. TRENDS IN AFRICAN MIGRATION

According to official statistics, about 30 million Africans-about 3 percent of the population-have migrated internationally (including within Africa). This figure-which includes both voluntary migrants and international refugees-almost, certainly underestimates the size and importance of migration from, and particularly within, Africa. Many Africans have moved to new countries, in most cases neighbouring ones, without bothering to cross at border posts or register with officials. And migration has a broad impact: each migrant may support a significant network of family members in the home country through remittances; in areas of heavy out-migration, economic activity is often highly dependent on these inflows. Emigration from Africa has increased substantially over the past several decades. Nevertheless, the migration rate (the ratio of emigrants to the total population of the country of origin) remains low on average, although with considerable variation across countries. Some of the smaller countries (for example, Cape Verde, Equatorial Guinea, Seychelles, São Tomé and Príncipe, Lesotho, and Mali) have gross emigration rates that exceed 10 percent (figure 1). This is in part because of limited livelihood opportunities and a high variability of income owing to dependence on primary commodities (Docquier and Schiff 2009). Several countries suffering civil disorder also have high emigration rates. For example, after more than three decades of war, Eritrean emigrants equal almost 20 percent of the country's population.

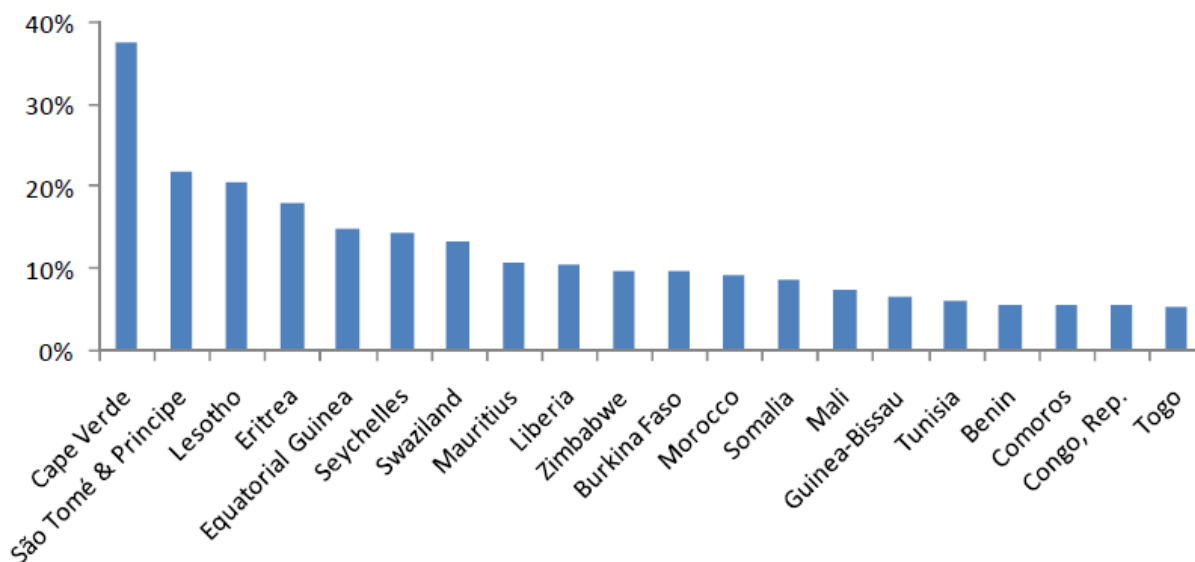


Fig 1: Stock of Immigrants from Africa (2010)

Source: Authors' calculations, based on data from World Bank 2011

About two-thirds of migrants from Sub-Saharan Africa, particularly poorer migrants, go to other countries in the region; the bulk of migrants remain within their sub-regions. In West Africa, for example, more than 70 percent of intra-African emigration was within the sub-region. In contrast, more than 90 percent of migrants from North Africa travel to countries outside the region.

Migrants from middle-income countries disproportionately migrate to destinations outside Africa, as they are more likely to have the resources to pay for transport to, and resettlement expenses in, the OECD countries, and

are more likely to have the education and other skills required to find a job there. By contrast, emigrants originating from poorer countries generally go to neighbouring countries, reflecting limited resources as well as common linguistic and historical roots.

New data on migration from household surveys conducted in Burkina Faso, Ghana, Nigeria, and Senegal indicate that migrants tend to be young adults (two-thirds of Burkina Faso emigrants were between the ages of 15 and 40) and male (more than 90 percent in Burkina Faso), generally with some education beyond primary school. For example, in Ghana the marginal increase in the probability of sending a migrant is about 8 percent for each additional year of schooling of the head of household. A similar trend is also observed in Nigeria, but not in the Burkina Faso survey. Migration from these countries resulted in significant occupational changes, in particular a transition from farming to trading, semi-skilled employment, and professional jobs. In Burkina Faso and Nigeria, migration allowed a shift from self-employment, often in farming, to wage employment. In Senegal, the shift in labour-market status is significant for students, many of whom were able to find wage employment after migrating. The sex, age, and educational composition of migrants vary by whether migration is within the country, to neighbouring countries, or to the OECD countries. Not surprisingly, migrants to the OECD countries generally tend to be older and better educated, and more than 70 percent are men. The survey data also show low rates of return: the share of emigrants who returned was only 3 percent in Nigeria, 9 percent in Senegal, and 25 percent in Burkina Faso. The majority of those who do return in Burkina Faso and Nigeria come back in fewer than four years. In Senegal, however, 66 percent of returnees had 15 or more years abroad. Demographic factors are likely to increase emigration from Africa substantially. The working age population is set to decline between 2010 and 2050 in Europe and the United States, and to increase sharply (implying a doubling of the labour force) in Sub-Saharan Africa. While the impact of declining population on labour demand in industrialized countries is uncertain, the aging of their populations will increase the demand for personal and health-care services. And in Africa, the growth of employment may not be strong enough to absorb all of the new entrants to the labour force. Thus both the demand and supply of migrants are likely to rise in the future. And even if Africa achieves rapid growth, the income gap with industrialized countries will remain a substantial incentive to migrate for the foreseeable future.

VI. IMMIGRANTS DEMOGRAPHICS IN FINLAND

It is not a matter of debate anymore that many ethnic and racial origins are found among immigrants in Finland. The rapid growth of the visible minority population was triggered by the changes in immigration regulations in 80's that have led to the shift in the principal source countries from European to non-European and to the shift in the ethnic origins of immigrants. Due to its geo-political location and history, Finland was not a major crossroads of migration in the 20th century. Until the 1980s, there was a far higher amount of emigration than immigration in Finland. The Finnish Institute of Migration calculated in 2004 that 790,000 Finns have emigrated since 1945 with 296,000 expatriates currently living abroad (Korkiasaari, 2005). Approximately, 132,000 people of foreign origin were resident in Finland in 2005 (Statistics Finland, 2007). The majority of these foreigners were not asylum seekers or refugees; 47 percent of migrants were spouses or partners of Finns (Heikkilä, 2007). The rate of asylum applications has hovered steadily around 2000 per year between 1990 and 2006 (Ministry of Labour, 2007). Though temporary labour migration is increasing, Finland has small numbers of foreign workers unlike other European nations. Less than 1 percent of the Finnish workforce can be categorized as low-wage

foreign workers (Bartram, 2007: 767). Indeed, immigrants to Finland tend to have a higher educational level than immigrants to Sweden or Denmark, for example, which can be attributed to proportionately large number of Estonians and Russians (Johansson, 2008).

Despite the fact that there had been some cross-border migration from Russia since Finnish independence in 1917, it abruptly stopped during the Second World War. Between the War and 1970, there was far greater emigration than immigration (Salo, 2004: 7). The first refugees came to Finland in 1973 when a small group of Chileans fleeing Pinochet arrived. Between 1973 and

1999, Finland has accepted 17,600 refugees (Salo, 2004: 7). The first immigration law (the Alien's Act) in Finland came into force in 1983. This restrictive law reflected a culturally homogenous view of the process because it largely required biological or family ties to immigrate to Finland (Sagne et al., 2007). The revised 1990 Alien's Act slightly opened the doors, resulting in a great increase in immigrants from the former Soviet Union. The growth in immigration occurred at the same time as a deep economic recession in Finland raising strong feelings of xenophobia and racism (Jaakkola, 1995). Finland joined the European Union in 1995. The EU is still developing an immigration agenda and cannot intrude on the sovereign right of nations to determine their own immigration policies. The main impact of EU membership on Finnish migration policies has been on asylum policies. The Finnish system for dealing with immigration issues is different from many other European countries because there are multiple actors involved (local police, the Immigration Authority, Ministry of Labour, Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, etc.) in developing policy rather than a single agency.

Migrants as a whole nonetheless remain a very small proportion of the Finnish population (approximately 2.5%) and are largely resident in the Helsinki metropolitan area. Migrants in Finland are enormously diverse and represent over 150 language groups and nationalities. Russian is the largest single language group (28.5%) among migrants, with English coming in a distant second (6.8%) (Institute of Migration, 2003). Migrants tend to have significantly higher unemployment rates than Finns despite being a far younger population group generally, though the rates vary greatly by nationality. The high unemployment rate among highly educated migrants has been generally attributed to the negative attitudes of Finnish employers towards foreign qualifications (Paananen, 2005). The rights of migrants have been extended in recent years to allow greater participation in political parties and associations, but migrants generally have a rather low profile in public life (Sagne et al., 2007: 107). Hence the Finnish case represents a migration context distinct from many other European nations, such as Germany, France or the UK, in its extreme diversity, small-scale and relative newness.

VII. UNEMPLOYMENT RATE IN FINLAND

Generally immigrants believe that Northern Europe is an Eldorado, a land flowing with milk and honey where everything is in abundance including well paid jobs. This explains why many African and indeed West African immigrants will do every thing possible to migrate in search of greener pastures. Part of this quest is to acquire tertiary education in Finland in order to enhance their job prospects. It is also important to note that like every other country on the face of this earth, Finland also has her own unemployment challenges arising from the global economic recession and the stiff competition emerging from the Asian angle. Needless to say that Finland recovered from the severe economic depression it underwent at the beginning of the 1990's during which the unemployment rate rose at an alarming rate. For several consecutive years until the year 2008, the unemployment rate has been declining.

Table I: Unemployment Rates in Finland, EA16 and EU27 (adapted from Trading Economics & Dahlskog, 2010)

Year	Finland	EA16	EU27
	Unemployment Rate (%)		
2001	9,1	8,2	
2002	9,1	8,7	
2003	9,0	8,9	
2004	8,8	9,1	
2005	8,4	8,8	
2006	7,7	7,9	
2007	6,8	7,4	
2008	6,4	8,2	7,5
2009	8,7	10,0	9,5

Table I shows the national unemployment rate in Finland, the unemployment rate of the Euro zone (EA16) and the European Union (EU27). During the past decade in Finland, the unemployment rate decreased for seven consecutive years between the years 2001-2008. However, in 2009, the unemployment rate was 8,7 percent in comparison to the year 2008 when the rate was about 6,4 percent. Due to the most recent economical crisis, most countries in Europe and in the rest of the world as well, have experienced a negative trend regarding unemployment rates. Although the national unemployment rate in Finland is below the EU average of 10 percent, the unemployment rates of foreign citizens living and working in Finland is still considerably higher than it is for the rest of the country and the EU average. (Finfacts).

However, recent realities have shown that the Nordic countries which include Finland are faring much more better in term of economic stability and employment prospects, Southern, Central and indeed substantially sound economies of Britain and France are currently groaning with the Greek and Spanish economies almost in ruins and in need of urgent excruciating bail outs. When you compare the Finnish economy to these, the difference is obvious that Finland is a lot more stable and the economy vibrant. More so, compared with Western African realities, Finland is a place to be for immigrants from countries where more than 50% of the population live below the poverty line.

VIII. COMPARISON OF IMMIGRANT EMPLOYMENT RATES

Deriving from statistics, one can note, that people of certain nationalities have higher representation in the Finnish labour market than those from other nationalities or geographical areas. This might be the result of

several different factors such as level of education, language barriers and also cultural differences. In some cases, the differences are remarkable. As we were able to see in Table 2, the national unemployment rate of Finland was 8.7 percent in 2009. The unemployment statistics for foreigners however, is at a rate of 20 percent which is more than twice as high as the national rate (statistics from 2007).

The largest immigrant groups in the Finnish labour market come from Russia, Estonia and Sweden. Table 2 shows that the unemployment rate of Swedes living in Finland was estimated to be around 9 percent in 2007, the corresponding national unemployment rate in 2007 was 6.8 percent. The second largest group in the Finnish labour market, the Estonians, have an unemployment rate of 10 percent whilst the biggest group, Russians have an unemployment rate of 30 percent.

Table II: Immigrants Unemployment Rates Adapted from Dahlskog, 2010)

Citizenship	Labour Force (2005)	Unemployment rate (regional labour statistics)					Estimate of the Ministry of Labour		
		2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2005	2006	2007
Russia	11720	42	39	39	36	34	39	35	30
Estonia	8734	20	18	16	15	14	16	12	10
Sweden	3847	17	16	17	16	15	11	10	9
United Kingdom	1773	12	12	14	14	11	13	11	10
Germany	1641	11	11	11	11	11	11	9	6
Turkey	1439	32	31	31	30	27	30	27	23
Somalia	1345	58	60	62	60	59	62	58	53
Serbia	1246	59	56	53	53	45	41	45	38
Thailand	1221	30	29	30	30	27	29	25	22
China	1215	10	9	9	10	8	10	8	7
Iraq	1075	75	73	70	66	64	67	66	62
Iran	928	62	61	61	55	51	60	54	47
USA	893	9	11	10	11	13	12	11	10
Vietnam	774	43	42	42	45	43	48	43	40
Italy	669	16	15	20	17	16	17	13	12
France	650	10	11	13	13	12	14	11	10
Afghanistan	502	...	69	66	75	64	66	62	54
Norway	352	15	15	15	14	13	12	10	8
Morocco	350	50	45	47	46	49	50	47	44
Others	14454								
Foreigners total	54828	31	28	29	27	25	28	24	20

As we discover in Table II, the immigrants working in Finland with the lowest unemployment rates are EU citizens and the highest rates are those of immigrants from the Middle East and Northern Africa. With an unemployment rate of 62 percent in 2007, Iraqi citizens have the highest unemployment rates followed by Afghani with 54 per-cent, Somali citizens with 53 percent and Iranian with 47 percent. The majority of Finland's immigrants live in the capital region, and the employment situations for immigrants is reportedly better there than in the rest of the country. According to Helsingin Sanomat (2005) Finnish education and work experience is

valued more than the foreign equivalences, and this is a contributing factor to the high unemployment rates of immigrants who consequently are forced to change their professions in order to be able to penetrate the labour market. (Helsingin Sanomat International Edition, 2005)

Language does have an impact on the unemployment rates. A good command of the Finnish language means easy communication and this is also a contributing factor in the case of Estonians in the Finnish labour market. Estonian and Finnish are similar languages and the cultures are alike and therefore it is easy for and Estonian to communicate with a Finnish person and vice versa. Russians generally have a high level of education, a fact that has not seemed to make a great impact on their unemployment rate which was estimated to be around 30 percent in 2007. Table 3 shows that 19 people originating from western countries generally experience low unemployment rates, which are almost similar to the national employment rates. Although research has shown that the prospects for immigrants to find jobs increases the longer they have stayed in Finland, there seems to be an exception for people originating from the Middle East and from the former Yugoslavia who still experience poor employment rates on the Finnish labour market. Another group with a significantly high rate of unemployment is that of the Somali immigrants who represent one of the largest immigrant groups in Finland. Koivukangas (2003) writes that it is unfortunate that the "increase in immigration to Finland took place in a period when the country was struck by heavy depression" which occurred in the early 1990s, a fact that is also pointed out by Helsingin Sanomat International Edition (2005) by stating that regard-less of the fact that a lot of the Somali immigrants have Finnish educations in fields that are experiencing a shortage of labour, they are still experiencing difficulties in finding jobs. It is difficult to find an explanation to this other than that this treatment of the Somali is a result of negative attitudes and impressions, probably stemming from the time of the economic depression. (Helsingin Sanomat International Edition, 2005)

IX. RESEARCH DESIGN

Qualitative research was considered appropriate for this study because it enabled the researcher to gain understanding and insight into the challenges faced by West African immigrants in Helsinki, Finland. This is to enable these challenges to be appreciated with a view to addressing them to promote the social policy of the Finish government and in furtherance of social justice and egalitarian Finish society.

The research involves a would be graduate and another university teacher from Nigeria who has shared the experiences of a lot other West African immigrants battling with job placements in Finnish private and public establishments after graduation from Finnish Universities, thus the Finnish university could relate to the experiences of her colleagues. Perhaps as result of this, participants seemed willing to share and discuss their problems and solutions with the researcher on a personal level during the interviews. By interacting directly with West African immigrants with Finnish qualifications in Helsinki, Finland, the researchers focused on what the issues or problems were regarding the challenges of competing in the Finnish labour market with other job seekers after graduation.

The data obtained from these two techniques will also be supplemented with interpretive data. To gain a general understanding of the activities mentioned on the free lists and the rank ordered tests, we carried out semi structured interviews with respondents. After informants are done with listing and selecting, I asked them why they made the choices they made (Weller and Romney 1988). The open-ended design of semi structured

interviews allows for minimum control of informants' responses, yet because the same questions are asked, comparison across informants is possible (Bernard, 2002). All the interviews were tape recorded with the permission of each informant. The interview guide also solicited demographic and socioeconomic data, including employment history, previous migration experience, and reasons for migrating to Finland.

X. RESEARCH PROCESS

Six persons were selected for the interview out four actually participated in the research exercise. The reason for the withdrawal of the other two respondents could not be ascertained as they failed to turn up for the interview. Part of what we can deduce from those who withdrew was the fact that they complained that they couldn't afford to keep the appointments with me because they had some job interviews to attend to. Out of the remaining four who participated in the interview three were males and one was female, two of the respondents came from Nigeria, one from Ghana and the other from Sierra Leone. All the respondents live in Greater Helsinki area of Finland. In the same vein, all the respondents have completed university programmes in different Finnish Universities. Two of them have first and second degrees in Business; one has an Education degree while the last has a degree in Information Technology. All the respondents have worked for about have worked briefly in different Finnish establishments. One of the respondents just changed job.

The timing and venue of the interviews were chosen by the interviewees themselves in order to make it easy for them to participate. Digital recorder was used to keep record of the conversations in order to help me remember everything said when we are doing transcribing. The longest interview session lasted for 1 hour 30 minutes while the shortest session lasted for 50minutes

The transcribing of the interviews from the digital 14 recorders took 5 days to be completed. A total of 10 pages of A4 size papers were made from the transcription of the 4 interviews.

X.1 Data Analysis

Data analysis is a very important aspect of all research studies, and a careful consideration is needed when choosing an analytic tool. Here for the purpose of the research work I adopted a phenomenological analytic method which helped me to break down the data. In the process efforts were made to ensure the following; bracketing and phenomenological reduction, mark out important meanings, put meanings together to form themes, recapitulating all the interviews, validating and modifying them and bring out general and individual points from the interviews (Hycner, 1999).

The bracketing was done by listening to all the interviews and reading the transcripts made from them, mapping out similarities and differences in the personal experiences of each interviewee in regards to labour exploitation in their working life. Moreover, pulling the similarities and differences together helped me to understand the important themes in the labour market experiences of West African migrants with Finnish qualifications, and the pattern of occurrences of this social phenomenon. The experiences were split into parts and arranged under different themes. The process of arranging the data into themes is known as thematizing. Hirjärvi & Hurme (2010) define thematizing as the process of collecting together characteristics which occur several times in the interviews. The understanding is that pre-planned themes will be extracted from the interviews. It is the researcher who finally makes the theme based on his or her interpretation of the data (Hirjärvi & Hurme 2010: 173.)

X.2 Reliability and validity of the study

Reliability and validity were required for this research in order to come out with correct results. Therefore the researcher ensures that the interview questions are too short, too long and not vague to ensure that the questions are clear enough to be understood for adequate responses. The interview questions address the research problem and provide adequate answers to the research questions. For better understanding of the study, the results were grouped into categories where themes were later created to organize relevant information. In the same vein, Silverman (2008) defined validity as another word for truth (Silverman 2008, 210) . In order to ensure validity of the data, the interviews were recorded and transcribed, and the transcribed copies were sent to interviewees for crosschecking.

X.3 Ethical Considerations

In the course of carrying out this research work, i made concerted efforts to ensure that all ethical standards required for research endeavours of this level are maintained and sustained throughout the research period. This is to guarantee the integrity of the research work and protect the respondents who volunteered to participate in the research work. The selected respondents were fully briefed on the nature of the research and their role and indeed risks (if any) in the course of the research. In the course of the research I also ensured confidentiality of the respondents' identity through the adoption of pseudo names to protect them from any form of identification and persecution because of their position and testimonies (Ethik-Kodex 1993, 1 B5). All assurances were given to the respondents that their responses will be used for research purposes only and that data will be dispensed with after the research is concluded.

X.4 Limitation of the Work

This work cannot be said to be exhaustive as it is fraught with a lot of limitations: firstly it must be noted researches of this nature may not be very free from author's prejudices since it involves issues of possible discrimination. However, efforts were made to ensure that all sides were adequately covered to firm up the balancing of the view points raised in the work. In the same vein, the challenge of scepticism is also there. As Brewer and Hunter (2006) explained that scepticism plays a reasonable and major part in every research (Brewer & Hunter 2006, 25). We tried my utmost to rigorously investigate the challenges faced by West African immigrants who have acquired Finnish educational qualifications face in the labour market in terms of job prospects. The result was also presented as honestly as possible. This is not to say that the experiences of four immigrants can serve as the basis of generalisation, but it gives useful insights into this challenge and will guide the policy thrust of immigrants' participation in the Finnish labour market. Another research with a larger sample size and across races will probably dig deeper into the challenges of this group of immigrants.

XI. RESEARCH FINDINGS

XI.1 Finnish Education and Generosity

The Finnish educational system is one of the most generous on the face of this earth, where in almost all the cases it is tuition free and a lot of incentives are given for people to emigrate from different regions of the world to study. The standards are also comparable to the best in the world as attested to in the previous chapters of the work. This makes Finnish universities attractive to immigrants from all parts of the world to study. Part of the plans of these immigrants is to pick up paid jobs upon graduation to earn a living, send remittances home and

settle in Finland probably with their families. The respondents unanimously attested to a rich academic experience while in school in Finland. Indeed one of the respondents relished his experience while in the university as he narrated how he went through some of the best professors and interacted with students from all parts of the world-an experience he will never forget thanks to the opportunity Finland gave him. All the four respondents agreed that the socio-economic condition at home in West Africa makes Finland a worthy destination for all of them. They would not want to go back but rather stay to eke a living in Finland. All the respondents interestingly acquired graduate qualifications in Finland. This is because graduate admissions are easier to get for Anglo phone West African immigrants to Finland due to the fact that the language of instruction is English language. According to the respondents, because of the admixture students in the different finish universities they attended, integration was not a major challenge; two of the interviewees however confirmed that there were isolated cases of racist gaze and stunts thrown at them while in school. This made them uncomfortable bur because there were students from almost all the countries in this world, companionship was easy and life in school was an adventure.

XI.2 Quality of Finnish Education

The interviewees were also unanimous in admitting that the quality of Finnish university training was world class with well grounded professors and good facilities for teaching and learning. This also corroborates what was previously said about Finnish university education. According to (PBS), for years, the Finnish educational system has received positive attention and gained a good reputation, partly due to the success of Finnish students in international measurements and comparisons such as the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) in which Finland has ranked highly ever since its introduction in 2000. Finland annually receives a significant stream of delegations called "educational pilgrims" from around 50 different countries who are who come to the country in order to find out the secret to the success of the Finnish educational system. Research has shown that teachers in Finland are happier than their counterparts in other countries and this might be one of the reasons that Finnish pupils achieve such good results (PBS). The above assertion confirms the high rating of Finnish universities which the respondents eventually enjoyed by virtue of attending some of these Finnish Universities. This academic rigor which Finnish universities have given the respondents also makes them equipped to enter into the Finnish labour market with the requisite skills

XI.3 Labour Market Experiences of Interviewees

This section of the work shows the actual experiences of the selected respondents in the Finnish labour market. It shows what each of the respondents actually experienced during job search, interview and actual engagement/ job placement.

XI.4 Covert and Overt Discrimination in the labour Market in Helsinki by Respondents

In the course of the interview, the respondents also appear to be a bit unanimous with regards to discrimination in the labour market in Helsinki while looking for job. Although the intensity of discrimination expressed by the respondents varied from mild to severe, it also showed a marked departure from their university experience. They agreed that racial segregation exists in the real life situation of the Finnish labour market. Indeed they agreed that blacks appear to be the most segregated against because of the obvious skin colour. While the Finnish government has done a lot to stem racial prejudice, the Finnish society shows racist bias especially in the private sector where most of the jobs are found. One of the respondents actually admitted that he was invited for an

interview but later turned down in what he felt was racist since he was not given any good reason. In another case, one of the respondents revealed that a grocery shop recruited an eastern European instead of him even though he did better in the interview. For this respondent the only explanation is segregation based on colour. Immigrants even with qualifications from their resident countries have always faced discrimination. It is not unique to Finland. In some cases, academic qualifications of immigrants are usually devalued even though they are obtained in their country of residence. For instance in Canada, Even though the literature suggests that the factor of race and ethnic origin can adversely affect immigrants' earnings, it is not always clear whether it is racial origin, credentials, or other features that are disadvantaged. It seems that studies that analyze self-reported immigrants' experiences of discrimination demonstrate more explicitly how race and ethnicity influence the devaluation of immigrants' human capital. For example, Basran and Zong, who surveyed foreign-trained Indo- and Chinese-Canadian professionals in Vancouver, have reported that 65 per cent of respondents perceived discrimination on the basis of their skin colour, and 69 per cent mentioned national or ethnic origin as the factors that influenced the evaluation of their human capital (1998: 12). In other words, Basran and Zong argue that visible minority immigrants in professional fields attributed their downward social mobility in Canada also to the problem of discrimination based on ethnic or racial origin. In sum, the studies suggest that visible minority immigrants do not have the same chances in the Canadian labour market as majority member immigrants. Race, ethnicity, and country of origin can be considered to be an important factor that affects the devaluation of immigrants' human capital in Canada. This Canadian experience is common place in most advanced capitalist countries of the world. Even in the developing countries, ethnic and racial segregation exists although it varies in intensity. Part of the explanation given by experts is that it is a manifestation of the struggle for scarce economic resources and it is fairly endemic in most societies. One of the respondents actually revealed that, he is not bothered about it since the prospects of securing a decent means of livelihood is higher in Finland than his West African country of origin. He actually stated that "in my country in Africa, the level of ethnic segregation in job placement is far higher than what I am experiencing here. I still prefer Finland to my country". Another respondent also stated that "these whites are good if they trust you, some of them have a very large heart. More so the Finnish government have intensified integration programmes aimed at building a country that respects people of all colours. Time and proper orientation will actually deepen the integration process in Finland and reduce segregation.

XI. 5 Language Barrier, Immigrants and the Finnish Labour Market

The importance of good working knowledge of a country's language is a major determination of job prospects. Interviewees were asked their proficiency in both Finnish and Swedish languages which are the working languages and the responses ranged from poor to fair. Almost all the respondents three out of four had already acquired university in their countries before immigrating to Finland for graduate studies. The import of this admission is that they do not a good knowledge of Finnish language has remained a major barrier. Employers will be reluctant to hire persons with poor working language of the resident country. Some countries insist that employees undergo language training to be able to cope with job placements. In the same vein some countries will design incentives in terms of wage differentials to ensure that immigrants learn the working language(s). In a research conducted by Li, Reitz, Ferrer and Riddel in Canada has shown the knowledge of a working language of English and French is not just an asset but leads to increased earnings by immigrants. The results of this research, regarding the significance of immigrants' educational degrees, are consistent with previous studies on the impact

of educational credentials on immigrants' earnings (Li 2001, 2008; Reitz 2001a; Ferrer and Riddell 2008). Speaking English or French as a first language and years in Canada since immigration also had a positive impact on immigrants' earnings. In Finland this is not an exception as evidence abounds to show that Finnish language mastery is a good requirement for job placement for immigrants. In fact, two of the respondents acknowledged that a good working knowledge of Finnish and Swedish languages would have fetched them not just a good job but a well paid job.

XI.6 Psychosocial Factors Inhibiting the Respondents

A thorough analysis of the interview also revealed that some of the respondents have some psychosocial challenges in the search of jobs. This according to two of the respondents arose probably from lack of self confidence and self defeat. Two of the respondent confessed that they did not consider themselves fit to work in certain organisations assumed to be dominated by whites. It is a show of inferiority complex hidden under the cloak of segregation. One of them actually admitted that the same job he failed to apply for as a result of this feeling of inferiority was picked up by a fellow black East African. In this case, the respondent is hugely responsible for not being able to pick up the job. Although this challenge is not common to all the respondents it remains a strong issue since it is apparent that some other immigrants may be facing similar challenges silently.

XI.7 Technological Gap

Another key discovery is a substantial technological gap between Finland and Africa. Most of the respondents already have university education in Africa before going for graduate studies in Finland. Gaps in Information Technology are so wide that the few years in Finland may not easily fill. You therefore have real situations where some immigrants from Africa may not have the requisite IT skills which are needed to be added to whatever Finnish University qualification for the enhancement of job prospects. Africa lags behind a lot and countries like India though battling with development challenges have advanced IT culture and by the time they migrate to Finland they already have a competitive advantage over African immigrants in IT knowledge and therefore find jobs easily. African immigrants tend to start from the scratch in IT knowledge and this affect their job prospects in Finland.

XII. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This final section will offer series of discussions and conclude the research work in ways that will offer useful recommendations to readers and Finnish authorities alike. As a West Africans immigrant we fully acquainted with challenges of finding jobs in Finland after graduation. This apparent fear is real to many immigrants of African origin. Issues of racial segregation against minority groups are common in many societies. Many authors believe that the 'We and They' in the face of competition for relative scarce resources explain why discrimination even in the labour market can be intense. The Finnish government has a track record of non-discrimination. It is also an immigrant-friendly country by international standard. More can still be done to adequately monitor discrimination against minority groups.

XII.1 Proper Monitoring of Segregation in the Labour Market

This can be done by full implementation of the Finnish Labour Laws which vigorously supports non-discrimination against people of different races resident in Finland. While this cannot be done from distant offices, law enforcement officers should monitor full implementation of these labour laws to allow for full

participation of qualified immigrants who can help in the development of the Finnish economy through gainful employment.

XII.2 Full Integration of Immigrants into the Finnish Society

This can be done through well designed programmes which will give these immigrants a good sense of belonging to the Finnish society based on International Labour Organisation's standards of integrating immigrants into their host country of residence. This will boost their self confidence and make them more useful to their host countries.

XII.3 Immigrants Knowledge of Host Country's Language

The study has shown that Finnish language proficiency is of utmost importance. It is therefore important for West African immigrants in Finland to strive to master the two major languages Finnish and Swedish which are very necessary for easy communication and job placement. It will also for all intent and purposes boost their chances of finding good jobs and good wages as well.

XII.4 Good Knowledge of IT

This has also been identified as a one of the major setbacks for West African immigrant job seekers in Finland. These graduates from West Africa and indeed other African countries should vigorously update their IT knowledge to international standards to brighten their job prospects in Finland upon graduation. Bearing in mind that they come from a technologically backward region of the world, they need to work extra hard to level up in IT know how to compete effectively with their peers in the Finnish labour market.

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